

# 14

## CHAPTER

### SEXUAL AND CONTRACEPTIVE BEHAVIOR OF YOUNG ADULTS

The reproductive health knowledge of young adults and their sexual and contraceptive behavior have important implications for the future of a population's health and well being. Parents, teachers, and health professionals are often unable to communicate effectively with young adults about their sexual and reproductive lives. In many countries, young people are seldom prepared with the information, skills, and resources needed to make a healthy transition to adulthood. Inadequate programs and lack of sex education can leave youth at the mercy of mass media and misinformation from peers.

Worldwide, it has been estimated that almost half of new HIV infections and one-third of all new sexually transmitted infections occur to people younger than 25 years of age. In addition to the consequences of sexual and reproductive decisions on health, an unintended pregnancy can disrupt a young girl's life by interrupting further schooling and training. In most countries, adults and communities generally hold young women, and not young men, responsible for the consequences of unprotected sex (Greene, et al., 2002; UNAIDS, 1999; Mcauley and Salter, 1995).

A young adult module, for women 15–24 years of age, has been included in the Reproductive Health Surveys (RHS) in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region to obtain data to address these concerns. The young adult modules have included questions related to family life education (which are presented in Chapter 15, Sexuality Education), first sexual experience, and current sexual behavior including contraceptive use. Additionally, several of these surveys have included questions on attitudes toward condom use and knowledge of reproductive health issues.

In each of the surveys, first sexual experience is classified as premarital or marital. This classification is ascertained by two questions in the survey instrument: (1) the date of the first sexual intercourse and the relationship to the partner at the time of first sexual intercourse, and (2) the date of first union for those women who have been or are in a marital union. If their partner was their husband, the dates of first sexual experience and of first marriage were compared in order to classify the first sexual experience as marital or premarital. Sexual experience was classified as premarital if the first sexual experience occurred at least one month prior to the date of marriage.

### 14.1 First Sexual Experience

Information on first sexual experience is available for seven RHS countries in the region: the five countries surveyed in Eastern Europe, and two of the three countries in the Caucasus region. As mentioned previously in this report, three surveys were conducted in Romania during the 1990s but the data shown are from the most recent survey in 1999 (a brief overview of trend data for Romania is included in section 14.5 of this chapter). The reported sexual experience of young adult women by marital status at the time of first sexual experience, by current age group and by residence, is shown in Tables 14.1.1 and 14.1.2, respectively.

There are distinct differences between Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. At least half of young adult women in the Eastern European countries report sexual experience, compared with approximately 30 percent of young women in Georgia and Azerbaijan. (Although not included in Table 14.1.1, 29% of 15–24 year old women in Armenia report sexual experience (Armenia National Statistical Service and ORC MACRO, 2001). In Eastern Europe, sexual experience ranges from about one-half of young women in Romania and

Moldova to 60% in Ukraine and approximately 75% in the Czech Republic and the areas surveyed in Russia. (As noted in previous chapters, the sub-national survey in Russia was conducted in three primarily urban sites in central Russia, and cannot be considered representative of Russia as a whole). Of those with sexual experience, the majority report premarital experience in Eastern Europe compared with only 3%–4% in the Caucasus region. Almost all women in the Czech Republic and in the areas surveyed in Russia who report sexual experience have had premarital sex. This is true for approximately four-fifths in Ukraine and Romania and 53% in Moldova.

As may be expected, sexual experience increases as age increases with marked differences between adolescents (15–19 years) and 20–24-year-olds. In Eastern Europe, most adolescents who report sexual experience have had premarital experience, as well as most women 20–24 years of age in Czech Republic and Russia; in Ukraine, 83% of sexually experienced women 20–24 years of age report premarital sex with the corresponding proportion at 75% in Romania and 53% in Moldova.

In rural areas, women marry earlier and are more likely to be married at first sexual experience (Table 14.1.2). For example, in Moldova, about half of all young adults report sexual experience. However, only 19% of young women in rural areas reported premarital sexual experience, compared with 37% in the four largest urban municipalities and 25% in other urban areas. The same pattern is seen in Romania with no significant difference in overall reported sexual experience by residence but a greater proportion of premarital sex in urban areas.

Sexually experienced respondents were asked if they or their partner used any contraceptive method, including condoms, during their first

Table 14.1.1					
Reported Sexual Experience by Marital Status at Time of First Sexual Experience by Current Age					
Among Young Women Aged 15–24					
(Percent Distribution)					
Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report					
Region and Country	Reported Sexual Experience			Total	No. of Cases
	No Sexual Experience	After Marriage	Before Marriage		
<b>Eastern Europe</b>					
Czech Rep., 1993					
15–19	46	†	54	100	646
20–24	2	1	97	100	737
Total	27	†	73	100	1,383
Moldova, 1997					
15–19	79	6	14	100	747
20–24	17	43	40	100	910
Total	50	23	26	100	1,657
Romania, 1999					
15–19	74	4	22	100	924
20–24	22	20	58	100	1,239
Total	47	13	41	100	2,163
Russia, 1999*					
15–19	51	†	49	100	748
20–24	8	5	87	100	1,058
Total	25	3	71	100	1,806
Ukraine, 1999					
15–19	68	3	30	100	1,079
20–24	12	15	73	100	1,151
Total	40	9	51	100	2,230
<b>Caucasus</b>					
Azerbaijan, 2001					
15–19	90	10	†	100	1,207
20–24	53	45	3	100	1,207
Total	74	25	1	100	2,414
Georgia, 1999					
15–19	84	15	†	100	1,142
20–24	47	50	2	100	1,246
Total	67	31	1	100	2,388

\* Data for Russia pertain to three primarily urban areas as described in Chapter 2.

† Less than 0.5%.

sexual encounter. In Russia and Ukraine, however, these questions were not posed to women who were married at first sexual intercourse. Table 14.1.3 shows that the highest rates of contraceptive use at the time of first intercourse among unmarried women were in the Czech Republic (57%) and Romania (58%). Lower rates were found in Ukraine (46%), Russia (46%), and Moldova (33%), and were only 14% and 3% for the few women reporting premarital sex in Azerbaijan

and Georgia, respectively. Compared with the other Eastern European countries, a much higher proportion of women used modern methods in the Russian areas surveyed and in Ukraine. In Moldova and Romania, where data are available for contraceptive use at first sex after marriage, fewer women reported that they or their husbands used contraception compared with women having premarital sex, and the predominant method was withdrawal. In all countries, independent of the timing of

**Table 14.1.2**  
**Reported Sexual Experience by Marital Status at Time of First Sexual Experience by Residence**  
**Among Young Women Aged 15–24**  
**(Percent Distribution)**  
**Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report**

Region and Country	Reported Sexual Experience			Total	No. of Cases
	No Sexual Experience	After Marriage	Before Marriage		
<b><u>Eastern Europe</u></b>					
Czech Rep., 1993					
Urban	26	0	74	100	940
Rural	28	0	72	100	443
Total	27	0	73	100	1,383
Moldova, 1997					
Municipalities *	49	14	37	100	507
Other Urban	51	24	25	100	302
Rural	51	29	19	100	848
Total	51	23	26	100	1,657
Romania, 1999					
Urban	48	7	45	100	1,668
Rural	44	21	35	100	995
Total	47	13	41	100	2,163
Russia, 1999 <sup>T</sup>					
Urban	25	3	71	100	1,806
Total	25	3	71	100	1,806
Ukraine, 1999					
Urban	41	7	52	100	1,734
Rural	40	12	48	100	496
Total	40	9	51	100	2,230
<b><u>Caucasus</u></b>					
Azerbaijan, 2001					
Urban	78	21	1	100	1,155
Rural	68	31	1	100	1,259
Total	74	25	1	100	2,414
Georgia, 1999					
Urban	72	26	2	100	1,444
Rural	61	38	1	100	944
Total	67	31	1	100	2,388

\* Less than 0.5%

† Includes four major cities: Chisinau, Tiraspol, Balti and Bender.

‡ Data for Russia pertain to three primarily urban areas as described in Chapter 2.

first sexual experience, condoms were the most used modern method, and withdrawal was the most commonly used traditional method.

Table 14.1.4 displays the primary reasons for not using contraception among sexually experienced respondents who did not use contraception at first sexual intercourse. Data for married women are available for four of the seven countries. In Moldova, Romania, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the majority of

married respondents did not use contraception because “they wanted to become pregnant.” “Did not think about using contraception” was the second most common reason for not using contraception in each of these four countries, especially Romania.

The most common reason unmarried women in the Czech Republic and Ukraine gave for not using contraception at first sexual intercourse was that “sex was unexpected”

Table 14.1.3					
Contraceptive Use at First Sexual Intercourse by Marital Status at First Sexual Intercourse Among Sexually Experienced Young Adult Women Aged 15–24, Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report					
Region and Country	Reported Contraceptive Use (%)				
	Any Method	Modern Methods		Traditional Methods	
		Condom	Other	Withdrawal	Calendar
<u>Eastern Europe</u>					
Czech Rp., 1993					
Married	† †	† †	†		
Not Married	57	23	5	28	1
Total	58	23	5	29	1
Moldova, 1997					
Married	18	3	0	13	1
Not Married	33	13	1	16	4
Total	26	8	0	15	3
Romania, 1999					
Married	27	6	1	18	2
Not Married	58	26	2	26	4
Total	51	22	2	24	3
Russia, 1999*					
Married	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Not Married	46	33	0	12	2
Ukraine, 1999					
Married	‡	‡	‡	‡	‡
Not Married	46	27	4	13	2
<u>Caucasus</u>					
Azerbaijan, 2001					
Married	1	0	0	§	§
Not Married	14	5	2	0	7
Total	1	§	§	§	§
Georgia, 1999					
Married	§	§	§	§	§
Not Married	3	3	0	0	0
Total	§	§	§	§	§

\* Data for Russia pertain to three primarily urban areas as described in Chapter 2.

† Fewer than 25 cases.

‡ Question was not asked.

§ Less than 0.5%.

(44% and 39%, respectively). The most common reason, reported by more than one third (37%) of unmarried women in the Russian areas surveyed was “they or their partner did not think about using contraception” and another 30% said that “sex was unexpected.” In both Moldova and Romania, “did not think about using contraception” and “sex was unexpected” were about equally important. One may hypothesize

that these two reasons are related, as it may be difficult to plan to use or think about contraception if sex is unexpected. Despite the small sample size, a striking 49% of unmarried women in Azerbaijan and 68% of unmarried women in Georgia did not use contraception at first sexual intercourse because they wanted to get pregnant. Most of their first partners were steady partners and perhaps getting pregnant was a transition to marriage.

**Table 14.1.4**  
**Most Commonly Cited Reasons for Not Using Contraception at First Sexual Intercourse**  
**by Marital Status at First Sexual Intercourse**  
**Among Sexually Experienced Young Women Aged 15–24,**  
**(Percent Distribution)**  
**Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report**

	Eastern Europe					Caucasus	
	Czech Rep. 1993	Moldova 1997	Romania 1999	Russia 1999*	Ukraine 1999	Azerbaijan 2001	Georgia 1999
<b><u>Married</u></b>							
Wanted to Get Pregnant	†	59	30	‡	‡	86	76
Did Not Think About Using Contraception	†	13	28	‡	‡	7	13
Did Not Want to Use Contraception	†	8	15	‡	‡	§	3
Did Not Know About Contraception	†	3	12	‡	‡	4	5
Sex was Unexpected	†	12	2	‡	‡		3
Other	†	4	4 ‡	‡		4	
Does Not Know/Does Not Remember	†	§	8 ‡	‡		0	
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b><u>No. of Cases</u></b>	5	411	231	‡	‡	787	916
<b><u>Not Married</u></b>							
Wanted to Get Pregnant	3	19	5	4	10	49	68
Did Not Think About Using Contraception	§	28	32	37	6	16	9
Did Not Want to Use Contraception	§	11	7	§	§	§	3
Did Not Know About Contraception	2	6	13	¶	¶	8	3
Sex Was Unexpected	44	29	30	31	39	27	18
Access/Knowledge/Availability, etc.	11	§	§	9#	12#	§	0
Thought She Couldn't Get Pregnant	27	§	§	12	22	§	0
Other	3	6	6	3	2	1	0
Does Not Know/Does Not Remember	12	§	7	5	8	§	0
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b><u>No. of Cases</u></b>	479	284	394	650	563	34	29

\* Data for Russia pertain to three primarily urban areas as described in Chapter 2.

† Fewer than 25 cases.

‡ Question was not asked.

§ Included in "Other" category.

|| Less than 0.5%.

¶ Included in Access/Knowledge/Availability, etc.

# Includes: Didn't Know Any Methods, Hard to Get Methods, and Wanted to Use but Did Not Have a Method.

## 14.2 Current Sexual Activity

Table 14.2.1 illustrates the current sexual activity status (at the time of the survey) of all women 15–24 years of age by current marital status for six of the seven countries. Sexually experienced respondents were asked when they had sexual intercourse. Most of the married women either have had sexual intercourse in the past three months or were currently pregnant or postpartum; pregnancy or postpartum status was the case for about one-third of the married young adults in Azerbaijan and Georgia. With the exception of the areas surveyed in Russia, the majority of currently unmarried women had never had

intercourse. However, differences in the proportion of women who had never had sexual intercourse varied substantially across countries, from 63% in Ukraine to 98% in Azerbaijan. Of those unmarried women with sexual experience, from 63% to 76% were currently sexually active (within the last 3 months) in the four Eastern European countries but only 30% were currently active in Azerbaijan and 13% in Georgia.

Almost three-quarters of sexually experienced women in the Eastern European countries used contraception at their most recent sexual intercourse (Table 14.2.2). Use of contraception does not vary substantially

<b>Table 14.2.1</b> <b>Sexual Activity Status by Marital Status</b> <b>Among Young Women Aged 15–24</b> <b>(Percent Distribution)</b> <b>Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report</b>						
	Eastern Europe				Caucasus	
	Moldova	Romania	Russia	Ukraine	Azerbaijan	Georgia
<u>Sexual Activity Status Among Married</u>	1997	1999	1999*	1999	2001	1999
<b>Never Had Intercourse</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Ever Had Intercourse</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Within the Last Month</i>	75	76	74	70	55	66
<i>1–3 Months ago</i>	6	6	3	5	6	2
<i>Over 3 Months ago, Within Last Year</i>	2	1	2	8	3	1
<i>One Year or Longer</i>	1	0	1	†	†	1
<i>One Month or Longer/Unknown Interval</i>	†	†	12	6	†	†
<i>Currently Pregnant or Postpartum</i>	16	16	8	11	36	30
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>No. of Cases</b>	769	780	691	839	795	900
<b>Sexual Activity Status Among Previously Married &amp; Never Married</b>						
<b>Never Had Intercourse</b>	80	65	44	63	98	85
<b>Ever Had Intercourse</b>	20	35	56	37	2	16
<i>Within the Last Month</i>	7	20	32	18	†	1
<i>1–3 Months ago</i>	5	6	9	5	†	1
<i>Over 3 Months ago, Within Last Year</i>	3	5	10	7	†	1
<i>One Year or Longer</i>	5	3	3	3	1	12
<i>One Month or Longer/Unknown Interval</i>	0	†	2	5	0	1
<i>Currently Pregnant or Postpartum</i>	†	†	1	1	†	1
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>No. of Cases</b>	888	1,383	1,047	1,388	1,619	7,798

\* Data for Russia pertain to three primarily urban areas as described in Chapter 2.

† Less than 0.5%.

<b>Table 14.2.2</b> <b>Use of Contraception at Most Recent Sexual Intercourse by Current Marital Status</b> <b>Among Sexually Experienced Young Women Aged 15–24,</b> <b>Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report</b>			
<b>Region and Country</b>	<b>Use of Contraception (%)</b>		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>Modern</b>	<b>Traditional</b>
<b><u>Eastern Europe</u></b>			
<i>Moldova, 1997</i>			
Married	78	48	30
Not Married	66	40	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>29</b>
<i>Romania, 1999</i>			
Married	62	25	37
Not Married	79	47	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>34</b>
<i>Russia, 1999*†</i>			
Married	74	55	19
Not Married	80	66	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>17</b>
<i>Ukraine, 1999†</i>			
Married	68	37	32
Not Married	78	57	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>28</b>
<b><u>Caucasus</u></b>			
<i>Azerbaijan, 2001</i>			
Married	38	7	31
Not Married	9	2	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>
<i>Georgia, 1999</i>			
Married	28	17	11
Not Married	2	2	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>

\* Data for Russia pertain to three primarily urban areas as described in Chapter 2.

† Among women who reported having sex in the previous 30 days.

between married and unmarried women in these countries. The use of modern contraception is more common than traditional methods, although in Romania use is fairly evenly split between modern and traditional methods. In Azerbaijan and Georgia, less than 40% of sexually experienced young adults used contraception at last intercourse, and use of contraception was substantially greater among married women. Most women in Azerbaijan used traditional methods, but 60% of users in Georgia reported using modern methods.

### 14.3 Condom Attitudes

Table 14.3.1 shows the percentage of sexually experienced women aged 15–24 who agreed with statements about condoms and condom use for the same four countries (Moldova, Romania, Azerbaijan and Georgia), categorized by women who have used condoms and never users of condoms. In general, but with some exceptions, a higher proportion of sexually experienced women who have used condoms at some time agreed with the statements about condoms and condom use than did women



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who had never used condoms. This is true for all four countries for the first four statements shown in the table. In Azerbaijan, only 29% of non-users agreed with the statement that “using condoms with your partner is a smart idea” compared with 71% of users. In Georgia, slightly less than 50% of non-users agreed with this statement, compared with 85% of ever users. More than three-fourths of both user and non-user groups in Moldova and Romania believed that using condoms with your partner was a smart idea.

About half of both users and non-users of condoms in Moldova agreed that condoms “diminish sexual enjoyment (58% and 47%, respectively). In Azerbaijan and Georgia, a greater number of condom users than non-users believed that “condoms diminish sexual enjoyment” (67% vs. 18% in Azerbaijan and 44% vs. 9% in Georgia). One can only assume that the opinions of never-users are based on what they have heard from other persons as they have never used condoms.

In conservative societies such as Azerbaijan and Georgia, it is not surprising that among condom non-users, not more than one-quarter of women (25% and 16%, respectively) agreed that women should ask their partners to use condoms. Similarly, in Azerbaijan and Georgia, only 15% and 8% of non-users, respectively, thought it was easy to discuss condoms with a prospective partner. Not surprisingly, those who were experienced with condoms were more at ease with the topic; in the four countries, 59% to 82% of ever-users agreed that “women should ask their partners to use condoms” and from one-third in Georgia to 69% in Romania agreed that “it is easy to discuss condoms with a prospective partner.”

From 35% (non-users in Azerbaijan) to 59% (non-users in Romania) of young adult women agreed that “condoms are not necessary if you

know your partner.” There were no substantial differences between non-users and users (range of 41%–50% for users) for this statement about condoms compared with the statements discussed above. The fact that less than 60% of respondents, independent of previous condom use, thought that “condoms are not necessary if you know your partner” may indicate the possibility of risky behavior if a young woman does not know her partner’s previous sexual history.

Users of condoms in Romania and Georgia were the least embarrassed about asking for condoms in family planning clinics or pharmacies (12% and 8%, respectively). Almost half of non-users in Moldova believed that it was embarrassing to ask for condoms (46%). Only one to five percent of both users and non-users in each country, with the exception of Azerbaijan (15%), believed incorrectly that the same condoms could be used more than once. The belief that “people who use condoms sleep around a lot” was more common among non-users than among users in each country. This type of “social stigma” may influence non-user’s decisions to use condoms.

The percentage of sexually experienced women who agreed with specific statements regarding interpersonal impact of condom use is presented in Table 14.3.2. Less than half of women in Azerbaijan said that they would feel safe from getting pregnant if their partner asked to use a condom (47%). In contrast, almost 9 out of 10 Moldovan and Romanian women agreed that they would feel safe from getting pregnant if their partner asked to use a condom (98% and 87%, respectively). The proportion of women who agreed that they would feel safe from being infected with HIV/AIDS if their partner asked to use a condom varied across the four countries. Only 33% of women in Azerbaijan and 53% in Georgia

**Table 14.3.1**  
**Agreement with Statements About Condoms and Condom Use By Condom Experience**  
**Sexually Experienced Young Women Aged 15–24**  
**Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report**

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Eastern Europe</b>				<b>Caucasus</b>			
	<u>Moldova 1997</u>		<u>Romania 1999</u>		<u>Azerbaijan 2001</u>		<u>Georgia 1999</u>	
	Ever Users of Condoms (%)	Never Users of Condoms (%)	Ever Users of Condoms (%)	Never Users of Condoms (%)	Ever Users of Condoms (%)	Never Users of Condoms (%)	Ever Users of Condoms (%)	Never Users of Condoms (%)
Using Condoms with Your Partner Is a Smart Idea	93	80	98	77	71	29	85	48
Condoms Diminish Sexual Enjoyment	58	47	37	24	67	18	44	9
Women Should Ask Their Partners to Use Condoms	64	49	82	56	59	25	61	16
It Is Easy to Discuss Condoms with a Prospective Partner	60	38	69	43	55	15	33	8
Condoms Are Not Necessary If You Know Your Partner	50	53	41	59	49	35	48	40
It is Embarrassing To Ask for Condoms in FP Clinics or Pharmacies	28	46	12	26	34	24	8	18
The Same Condoms Can be Used More Than Once	2	2	1	1	15	5	2	1
People Who Use Condoms Sleep Around a Lot	17	39	9	21	10	18	3	6
<b>No. of Cases</b>	343	632	587	676	97	737	118	833

**Table 14.3.2**  
**Agreement with Specific Statements Regarding Interpersonal Impact of Condom Use**  
**Among Sexually Experienced Young Women Aged 15–24**  
**Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report**

<b>“If Your Partner Would Want to Use Condoms with You, Would You Feel...”</b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Eastern Europe</b>		<b>Caucasus</b>	
	(%) <u>Moldova, 1997</u>	(%) <u>Romania, 1999</u>	(%) <u>Azerbaijan, 2001</u>	(%) <u>Georgia, 1999</u>
Safe from Getting Pregnant	90	87	47	63
Safe from Getting HIV/AIDS	87	85	33	53
Safe from Getting Other STDS	89	85	37	52
Angry	24	13	22	13
Insulted	*	*	22	*
Worried You Have Done Something Wrong	21	9	21	11
Suspicious of Partner's Behavior	*	23	18	14
Embarrassed	33	15	*	22
<b>No. of Cases</b>	975	1,263	834	951

\* Question was not asked.

agreed with this statement, whereas in Moldova and Romania, more than 85% agreed.

A similar proportion of women who would feel protected against HIV/AIDS if their partner wanted to use a condom, agreed that they “would be safe from getting other sexually transmitted infections”. Women in Moldova and Azerbaijan would be more likely to be angry (24% and 22%, respectively) if their partner asked to use a condom than would women in Romania and Georgia (both 13%). This same pattern holds true for being worried about having done something wrong. The women in Romania were the most likely to be suspicious of their partners’ behavior (23%, as opposed to 18% in Azerbaijan and 14% in Georgia), and women in Moldova were the most inclined (33%) to be embarrassed by the question; 22% of women in Georgia and 15% in Romania would be embarrassed by their partner asking to use a condom.

#### **14.4 Trend Data in Romania (1993–1999)**

As previously noted, trend data for young adults are only available for Romania, where data are available for females for 1993, 1996 and 1999, and for males for 1996 and 1999. One of the objectives of the 1999 RHS in Romania was to examine current indicators and recent trends in sexual behavior, pregnancy experience, and contraceptive use among young adults. Findings from the 1993 RHS and the 1996 YARHS in Romania allowed an examination of the trends among young adult women during the 1990s. In addition, young adult men were included in the 1996 and 1999 surveys.

Data from all three surveys showed that initiation of sexual activity for young women in Romania took place fairly late; in 1999, only 26% of female adolescents (15–19 years of age)

had ever had sexual intercourse. However, this proportion was an increase of 62% over 1993 (26% vs.16%) as shown in Table 14.4.1. The increase in the level of sexual experience among 20–24 year old women, from 70% to 78%, was less dramatic. Similarly, sexual experience among young men had changed little between 1996 and 1999: the proportion of 15–19 year old males who reported sexual experience increased by 10% (from 41% to 45%) and there was no change among 20–24 year olds (93%).

In all three surveys, most sexually experienced women reported that their first sexual intercourse was premarital. In 1993 and 1996 only slightly more than one-half of women reporting sexual experience had premarital sexual experience. However, in 1999, more than three out of four sexually experienced women reported premarital sexual intercourse. In all three surveys, sexually experienced adolescents were more likely to report premarital sex than 20–24 year olds were. However, the increase in premarital initiation

Table 14.4.1					
Reported Sexual Experience by Marital Status at Time of First Sexual Experience by Gender					
Among Young Women and Men Aged 15–24					
Reproductive Health Surveys: Romania, 1993, 1996 and 1999					
(Percent Distribution)					
Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report					
Women 15–24					
Current Age	Reported Sexual Experience			Total	Unweighted No. of Cases
	No Sexual Experience	After Marriage	Before Marriage		
Romania RHS, 1993					
15–19	84	7	9	100	745
20–24	30	33	37	100	896
Total	59	19	22	100	1,641
Romania YARHS, 1996					
15–19	80	7	13	100	1,239
20–24	26	36	38	100	786
Total	54	21	25	100	2,025
Romania RHS, 1999					
15–19	74	4	22	100	924
20–24	22	20	58	100	1239
Total	47	13	41	100	2,163
Men 15–24					
Current Age	Reported Sexual Experience			Total	Unweighted No. of Cases
	No Sexual Experience	After Marriage	Before Marriage		
Romania YARHS, 1996					
15–19	59	†	41	100	1,322
20–24	7	1	92	100	725
Total	34	1	66	100	2,047
Romania RHS, 1999					
15–19	55	0	45	100	311
20–24	7	2	91	100	320
Total	29	1	70	100	631

\* Men were not interviewed in 1993

† Less than 0.5%.

Source: Serbanescu F, Morris L, Marin M, (eds), 2001.

of sexual intercourse was substantial and parallel among both 15–19 and 20–24 year olds in 1999 compared with previous years. The proportion of adolescent women who initiated sexual activity before marriage was much higher in 1999 than in previous years: 83% of sexually experienced women aged 15–19 were not married when they first had sex, compared with 64% in 1996 and 57% in 1993. Similarly, premarital intercourse among sexually experienced 20–24 year olds increased from 53% in 1993 to 75% in 1999. The very high proportion of young men who initiated sex before marriage remained unchanged between 1996 and 1999 (>95%).

Compared with the 1993 and 1996 surveys, in 1999 the proportion of sexually experienced young women whose first intercourse was premarital increased substantially among 15–19 year olds in urban areas—from 67% in 1993

to 80% in 1996 to 91% in 1999—and almost doubled among adolescents in rural areas—from 43% to 48% to 74% (data not shown).

As shown in Table 14.4.2, contraceptive use at first premarital intercourse among young women, which increased by 50% between 1993 and 1996 (from 26% to 39%), continued an upward trend reaching 58% in 1999; almost all the increase was due to the increased use of condoms, whose prevalence more than tripled from 1993 to 1996 (from 4% to 13%) and doubled from 1996 to 1999 (from 13% to 26%). Although withdrawal was the leading method at first intercourse in both 1993 and 1996, and had increased by 50% since 1993, in 1999 condom use was equal to withdrawal use. Among young men, the increase between 1996 and 1999 was equally dramatic. Overall contraceptive use at first premarital intercourse almost doubled from 35% to 64%,

<b>Table 14.4.2</b> <b>Use of Contraception at Time of First Premarital Sexual Intercourse</b> <b>Among Young Women and Men Aged 15–24</b> <b>Reproductive Health Surveys: Romania, 1993, 1996 and 1999</b> <b>(Percent Distribution)</b> <b>Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report</b>					
	<i>Romania RHS,</i> 1993	<i>Romania YARHS,</i> 1996		<i>Romania RHS,</i> 1999	
<b>Contraceptive Method</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
<b>Any Method</b>	26	39	35	58	64
<b>Modern Methods</b>	5	15	17	28	40
Condom	4	13	16	26	39
Other Modern	1	2	1	2	1
<b>Traditional Method</b>	21	24	24	30	24
Withdrawal	17	21	15	26	22
Calendar	3	3	2	4	2
<b>No Method</b>	75	61	66	42	36
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100	100	100
<b>% of All Users Using a Modern Method</b>	19	39	49	49	63
<b>Unweighted No. of Cases</b>	431	425	1,208	937	442

Source: Serbanescu F, Morris L, Marin M, (eds), 2001.

and condom use was almost 2.5 times greater (39% vs. 16%) in 1999 than in 1996. As with women, the use of withdrawal by men increased moderately between the two surveys, but unlike women, the use of modern methods was much higher among men than the use of traditional methods.

If the first sexual experience was marital (Table 14.4.3), many fewer women reported using contraception, mainly withdrawal, in all three surveys. The levels of use remained basically unchanged between 1993 and 1996 but almost doubled in 1999 from 14% to 27%. Although the use of modern methods paralleled the increase in traditional method use (from 3% to 7%), most of the increase in contraceptive use was the result of greater use of traditional methods, which increased from 11% to 20%, accounting for 75% of use at first intercourse.

Although detailed tables are not shown here, comparison with the previous surveys also reveals important changes in contraceptive prevalence and contraceptive method mix among young adult women in 1999 at their most recent sexual encounter. Among women currently married or in consensual union, whose contraceptive prevalence was only slightly higher in 1996 than in 1993 (53% vs. 50%), the use at last intercourse increased to 62% in 1999. Moreover, the use of modern methods continued to increase, from 10% in 1993 to 20% in 1996 to 25% in 1999, whereas the use of traditional methods remained relatively stable (from 40% to 34% to 37%). Among unmarried young women, contraceptive use increased from 67% in 1996 to 79% in 1999, with most of the improvement due to a substantial increase in the use of modern methods (from 36% to 47%), particularly in condom use (from 22% to 32%).

<b>Table 14.4.3</b> <b>Use of Contraception at Time of First Sexual Intercourse</b> <b>Among Young Women Aged 15–24 Whose First Sexual Intercourse Was Marital</b> <b>Reproductive Health Surveys: Romania, 1993, 1996 and 1999</b> <b>(Percent Distribution)</b> <b>Eastern Europe and Eurasia: A Comparative Report</b>			
<b>Contraceptive Method</b>	<i>Romania RHS,</i> 1993	<i>Romania YARHS,</i> 1996	<i>Romania RHS,</i> 1999
<b>Any Method</b>	15	14	27
<b><u>Modern Methods</u></b>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>
Condom	2	2	6
Other Modern	*	1	1
<b><u>Traditional Method</u></b>	<u>13</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>20</u>
Withdrawal	11	10	18
Calendar	2	1	2
<b>No Method</b>	85	86	73
<b>Total</b>	100	100	100
<b>% of All Users Using a Modern Method</b>	19	20	27
<b><u>Unweighted No. of Cases</u></b>	387	363	326

\*Less than 0.5%.

Source: Serbanescu F, Morris L, Marin M, (eds), 2001.

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## 14.5 Summary of Findings

- ◆ There are distinct differences between Eastern Europe and the Caucasus region. At least one-half of young adult women (ages 15-24) in the Eastern European countries report sexual experience (from 50% in Moldova to 75% in Russia) compared with approximately 30% of women in the countries of the Caucasus region.
- ◆ In Eastern Europe, the majority of young adults who report sexual experience have had premarital sexual intercourse compared with less than 5% in the Caucasus.
- ◆ In all countries, a higher proportion of women with premarital sexual experience report that they or their partner used contraception at sexual debut than did women whose first sexual experience was at the time of marriage. However, only 3% to 33% of women with premarital sexual experience used a modern method at the time of first intercourse.
- ◆ In Eastern Europe, 40% to 66% of unmarried women who are sexually active used modern contraception at last intercourse indicating an improvement in use since sexual debut. In Romania, modern contraceptive use increased from 36% in 1996 to 47% in 1999, particularly in condom use (from 22% to 32%).
- ◆ Although the proportion of sexually active young adults in Romania increased between 1993 and 1999, pregnancy rates declined slightly, probably as a result of increased use of modern contraception.

